A growing diamond

Wilkes-Barre, region enjoying dynamic rebirth
So what does the future hold for downtown Wilkes-Barre?

Larry Newman, executive director at Diamond City Partnership, said in these days of the continuous, progressive process of downtown revitalization, “quality of place” matters more than ever. “The fact is, in the 21st century, quality of place is economic development, because we live in an age when talent is mobile, and so a community’s ‘curb appeal’ is a big part of what drives economic prosperity,” Newman said. “Talented people are relentlessly continuing to move to those communities that offer both opportunity and a high quality of place.”

That’s because, Newman noted, quality places attract people.

Larry Newman, executive director of the Diamond City Partnership in Wilkes-Barre, is the architect of the city’s resurgent downtown revitalization plan. So what does this mean for the city and the region?

“Simply put, the growth of King’s and Wilkes, and their emergence as downtown economic anchors, is enormously beneficial to both the city and the region,” Newman said. “These days, there are lots of American cities that are pursuing economic development strategies based around ‘Eds and Meds’ — colleges and hospitals — but there are very few cities in which that opportunity is so obvious. We have two different four-year higher-ed institutions bookending Wilkes-Barre’s central business district — any other town would turn itself inside out to be in that situation.”

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Larry Newman, executive director at Diamond City Partnership

Quality of place has been defined “as the physical characteristics of a community, the way it is planned, designed, developed and maintained that affect the quality of life of people living and working in it and those visiting it both now and in the future.”

Larry Newman, executive director of the Diamond City Partnership in Wilkes-Barre, is the architect of the city’s resurgent downtown revitalization plan.
Newman

Newman said luxury living is one of the major elements of Wilkes-Barre’s current Downtown Plan.

Downtown retrofitting

Newman said one of Wilkes-Barre’s downtown planning challenges is the reality that its central business district was built for a population twice the size of what it is today.

It’s sort of like recovering from a long illness and discovering that your clothes are too big,” Newman said.

“When you combine that with the challenges of a weak market and all of the economic changes that have buffeted every Main Street in America, you end up with lots of empty buildings — stores, churches and more. They’re often well built and beautiful, but they’ve outlived their original function."

However, Newman explained that in a place with two growing educational institutions, those empty buildings also represent an opportunity to choose. He said King’s and Wilkes have increasingly chosen to repurpose downtown’s existing buildings, maximizing the value of what’s already in place without the need for new construction, and strategically placing new facilities in locations where they can present the most civic benefit.

For example:

• King’s-on-the-Square (former Ramada) now houses King’s science programs.
• The old Spring Brook Water Company building on North Franklin Street is about to be remade to house King’s engineering programs.
• The Times Leader’s old home will soon house more programs for King’s as well.
• Wilkes has been transforming the second block of South Main Street with its business school, a new Sundown Art Gallery, the Ramirezia Media Center, and more.
• Wilkes’ private match has secured the public dollars that have made possible new storefronts along South Franklin and West South streets.
• The conversion of the YMCA’s upper floors into Wilkes student housing has allowed the Y to remain viable in its historic building.
• And because of the changes those moves by the schools are generating follow-on investments by a variety of private developers throughout center city.

“As the lines are blurring between the schools and the city, Downtown Wilkes-Barre is becoming one big campus — and that’s proving to be good for both town and gown,” Newman said.

Technology to the forefront

Newman said there’s no question that downtown has continued to benefit from the growth of the technology sector and the local startup sector. He said downtown is referred to as “the region’s innovation district,” that isn’t a marketing slogan. “It’s a fact,” Newman said.

“Right now, downtown Wilkes-Barre is home to more than two dozen different tech startups, and one-third of all the information-sector jobs in the entire Wilkes-Barre/Scranton-Hazelton metropolitan area.

Newman said there are several reasons for this, but one of the big reasons is the fact that, across the county, an increasing number of colleges and universities now view walkability as a basic site-selection amenity.

“...To put it another way, office employers have discovered that a location in a vibrant, live-work neighborhood is better for recruiting older workers — especially one with colleges — makes it much easier to attract talented workers. And, downtown Wilkes-Barre is the best live-work neighborhood in NEPA,” Newman said.

Newman said when you work downtown it is fun:
• Immediate access to dozens of downtown dining and after-hours options.
• Retailers and personal service businesses now view walkability as a basic site-selection amenity.

“...It’s a fact,” Newman said.

With new home, upgraded press TL recommits to downtown WB

WILKES-BARRE — With a newly refurnished facility and an upgraded press, the Times Leader has reconfirmed its commitment to downtown Wilkes-Barre.

The newspaper sold its North Main Street building in January to King’s College and combined its operations in its building at 90 E. Market St.

“We are extremely excited to be able to bring all of our employees under one roof and continue to be a leader in the downtown Wilkes-Barre business community,” said Times Leader Media Group Publisher Mike Murray. “Over the past several months, we’ve invested heavily in our press to ensure a quality group of products are printed and delivered.

In addition, through enhanced technology, moving to our Market Street facility allows us to take the next step in expanded news coverage by creating a mobile newsroom,” Murray continued. “This allows our team of professional journalists to be in the communities we serve more and more often.”

“Our commitment to remaining the dominant news voice in Wilkes-Barre remains at the top of our priority list along with providing the readers of Luzerne County only the most complete and up-to-date coverage,” the publisher added. “We take our mission seriously and are so proud to be a part of so many daily lives. This move strengthens our ability to meet the needs of the consumers of our market.”

The Market Street building now hosts the Times Leader’s advertising, circulation and editorial departments in addition to its press and production facilities.

Wilkes-Barre Mayor Tony George was pleased to hear the newspaper is committed to the downtown area.

“It’s great that the Times Leader is dedicated to remaining in the city,” George said.

George wasn’t the only person happy that the Times Leader will call center city home.

“It concentrates the paper in their building on Pennsylvania Avenue while making investments to update and modernize their building into our eastern gateway into the city,” Wojo van Genderen, Chief Executive Officer at the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, said. “The city benefits, the college is enhanced, the Times Leader continues to operate as a whole in the city and it continues our economic development momentum in the Valley.”

The newspaper welcomed more than 30 state, county and city officials and business and community leaders to a ribbon cutting on Thursday to celebrate the opening of the remodeled Market Street building.

“The Times Leader is here to stay in Wilkes-Barre and we look forward to continuing our over 100 years of service to the community as the only local daily newspaper printed in Luzerne County,” Murray said.

The best way to bring back a downtown, hands-down, is to get people living there again.

See NEWMAN | 5

The F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts to host an evening performance.
The projects took a series for more than $11 million housing projects account larger community, he said. downtown, as well as to the multitude of benefits to developments provide a to the city. Newman said that his organization’s most recent report noted that center city residents are regularly patronizing downtown restaurants and stores at substantially higher rates than any other survey respondents.

And, Newman noted, downtown residential growth is on the rise. He said the City of Wilkes-Barre had not only doubled from 18701 ZIP code. In the past decade ago, with the theater project and downtown housing is bringing the business district more diverse, more pedestrian-friendly, more lively, more varied in its mix of uses. In other words, once we began moving it more vital, Newman said: "When we’ve gone in the other direction — for example, when we’ve privileged cars over people, or replaced buildings with parking lots, we’re left backwards.”

Newman said at the end of the day, it’s about creating value, both in an economic sense, and in an intangible sense. So many of the community’s challenges are connected to distance and disinvestment and economic competitiveness. "The city’s downtown is at its best during Farmers Market and buildings. He said they are a huge part of what makes downtown housing is bringing옷 the ‘Innovation District’ to realize that we can point to downtown’s historic buildings. He said they are a part of what makes downtown center city special, and a huge part of what makes downtown a huge part of what makes downtown a huge part of what makes downtown a huge part of what makes downtown a huge part of what makes downtown a huge part of what makes downtown.

Incidental progress plan

Newman also said there was a long way to go. "To be sure, we still have a long way to go," Newman said. The long-term goal, Newman said, is to position downtown so that it will no longer need only park once before walking to a variety of destinations. Alternately, he said, the goal is to be a place where you don’t have to drive at all — and, in fact, downtown already has higher numbers of people commuting on foot, by bike and via transit than does the community as a whole. "To be sure, we still have a long way to go," Newman said. It’s also worth noting that there’s a website called WalkWilkes.com, which makes the walkability of almost every address in the U.S. from 1 to 100. According to WalkWilkes.com, downtown Wilkes-Barre currently has a “Walk Score” of 52, which puts downtown Wilkes-Barre in the category of reservation for neighborhoods where daily

Newman said the new downtown residents and businesses are part of the solution, but so is the improvement of the physical environment — buildings, and investing in the mix of uses of the experien- a huge high on the priority list.

We’ve deliberately encouraged investments that foster vitalit...
Retailer bucking national trend; downtown store thriving

By Bill O'Boyle | boboyle@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — When the conversation turns to downtown revitalization, there is one name that always comes to the forefront.

“Did you Boscov today?”

That simple, yet effective slogan has been around for decades. The five-floor department store with all the bargains and the loyal, friendly sales staff and the management/ownership that customers are on a first-name basis with, has been the anchor in downtown Wilkes-Barre for generations.

Jim Boscov, the president/CEO of the family-owned business, looked back on 2017 with great pride. Boscov’s retail success is a sharp contrast to what has been going on in the world of large department store chains — many having closed numerous stores or filed for bankruptcy.

But not Boscov’s. Jim Boscov said a new store opened in October 2017, and another new store will open in October of this year in Connecticut, bringing the total to 47 Boscov’s.

And as successful as Boscov’s has been, 2017 began on an extremely sad note — Albert Boscov died on Feb. 10, 2017, at the age of 87. Albert’s leadership, based on bringing quality merchandise at reasonable prices to customers, is the foundation that the business is built on and continues today. Add to that the loyal customers and workers and extensive community service, and you see why the answer to “Did you Boscov today?” is almost always “yes.”

The survey shows Newman said 69 percent of all respondents to the Diamond City Partnership’s most recent online community survey reported that they are regular or occasional customers of the city’s downtown Boscov’s. In fact, Newman said, more survey respondents said that they were regularly shopping at Boscov’s than at the Wyoming Valley Mall.

“In this day and age, that really says something about the efforts of Boscov’s management and associates,” Newman said.

Downtown patrons of Boscov’s even more hourly — according to the same survey, 80 percent of downtown workers and 70 percent of downtown residents are shopping at Boscov’s regularly or occasionally.

“It’s easy to take Boscov’s presence on South Main Street for granted, until you remember that most American cities once had big department stores anchoring their Main Streets, and that almost none of those stores remain today,” Newman said. “In fact, I can’t tell you...”

Looking

From page 4 errands do not require a car.

“In comparison, the city as a whole has a Walk Score of 61, so, we’re headed in the right direction,” Newman said.

Newman said the HQ2 proposal repeatedly stressed Amazon’s desire for a walkable, connected, mixed-use campus in a setting that would attract the necessary technical talent. Respondents were directed to outline the availability and diversity of the housing options adjoining the proposed sites, and to identify all transit options — specifically pedestrian access and bike lanes.

And, Newman said, the proposal repeatedly asked respondent communities to outline all “connectivity options: sidewalks, bike lanes, transit, metro, bus, light rail, train, and additional creative options to foster connectivity between buildings/facilities.”

So despite not being among the final 20 possible sites for HQ2, Wilkes-Barre has a solid plan in place to progressively improve the downtown and beyond. As Amazon seeks a vibrant, walkable live-work environment, a much smaller version has been unfolding right here in Luzerne County.

View | Times Leader file photo

Boscov’s department store on South Main Street in Wilkes-Barre.

Times Leader file photo

Boscov’s now carries a new line of furniture by Scott Living.
Community growth starts with ABCs

To paraphrase the great home run king Roger Maris and the Roman philosopher Seneca, creation, retention, innovation and growth don’t just happen by chance, but are accomplished when preparation meets opportunity.

With a coalition of Wilkes-Barre’s ABCs – academic, business and community leaders – we are in the third year of a two-year strategic plan designed to enhance our community as a great place to live and do business. We are building momentum, and now it’s all about execution. Our area has strong values prepositions to leverage, we’ve made key strategic investments, and we are broadening our reach out on the academic front, the business front and in the quality of our community.

Our area continues to grow in business, industry and labor mix. With a Northeastern Pennsylvania workforce of more than 250,000 workers, our main industry segments are in the ever-inflating education and healthcare sectors as well as in the growing tech services and e-commerce sectors.

Boscov’s

From page 6 how many times I’ve watched people who are here on business make a point of stopping by Boscov’s while they’re in town simply because of the opportunity to experience a traditional full-service downtown department store, with fine floors connected by each floor, a restaurant and a candy counter. It’s hard to appreciate how rare that has become.

Core values matters

Jim Boscov and his uncle instilled all the core values in his family and workers, and they are adhered to each and every day.

“We have seen a record increase in our sales,” Boscov said. “Most retailers are not doing that. And that sales increase is before our e-commerce numbers are added in — it’s just for brick and mortar sales — and that is impressive and we are proud of that.”

Boscov said the key to success in retailing and embellishing their relationships and partnerships with vendors and that is often passed on to customers.

“People give the company its personality,” Boscov said. “It’s all about people — loyal and wonderful workers and customers.”

Boscov said many Boscov’s employees know their customers by name and they often talk about family and other issues in their lives. That personal touch, Boscov said, is one of the main components to Boscov’s good business.

Future plans

Boscov said there are no immediate plans to change anything at the Wilkes-Barre store. Here said the recent million dollar-plus renovation project was received well by customers and employees.

“Our goal is to maintain our business in Wilkes-Barre,” Boscov said. “If you really want to be that local family business, you have to be a part of the community for real, not pretend, and do that.”

“Some of the needs of the community are the support of Boscov’s corporate mission.”

Joe Amato Properties would like to extend our thanks to all the loyal patrons of our shopping centers

University and King’s College, the largest student enrollments of all time at our institutions of higher learning, and helping make Wilkes-Barre Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Bosco said a lot of hard work has gone in to improving the downtown.

“The good news is you’ve got people very involved who have made a difference and will make a difference in the future,” Boscov said. "It’s incredible to watch the Wilkes-Barre downtown in recent years, more residents, more restaurants, a bigger presence of Wilkes-Barre’s corporate mission. It’s the right thing to do.”

“Is it good for business? Sure it is, but it’s also the right thing to do.”

Boscov said Wilkes-Barre’s downtown is a part of the community that is very exciting. We certainly want to be a part of it and support of it.”

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More jobs downtown
By Bill O’Boyle

Geo George loves that
old college spirit
By Bill O’Boyle

WILKES-BARRE — Having two coll-
ages in downtown makes up a full third of the technol-
gy leaders to transform the Wyoming
Valley, diversifying the base
of Commerce, said the city is going through an economic resurgence, and the
area or further expanding its business in the
downtown, creating an influx of housing development to the
city. In parallel, the second
ranked programming, generates close
of $10 million of economic impact to the
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with the investment community.
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Market Street

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Former coal land attracting commercial projects

By Jennifer Learn-Andes

As it nears sale of a 330-acre site in Nanticoke and Hanover Township, the nonprofit Earth Conservancy is shifting much of its focus on another one of its mine-scarred holdings — a 2,200-acre south known as the Blue Transdale site.

Located primarily in Hanover and Newport townships, the Blue Transdale project will create a mix of residential, industrial and public open space after it is cleaned up, said Earth Conservancy Executive Director Mike Dziak. Between 400 and 500 acres must be reclaimed, he said.

“That’s the next big area for us to do work,” he said.

Final negotiations are underway for Earth Conservancy to sell the 335-acre site to a Pennsylvania-based NorthLight Developments, which owns a coal mining- and online pottery retailer Chevvy.com. As it nears sale of a Blue Transdale, Dziak said.

Known as “Hanover 9,” this partially wooded land runs along Route 29 on the east side and will connect to the new South Valley Parkway under construction. It is also accessible from Kosciusko Street near the Lennox Village residential development and across from Laurens County Community College, maps show.

Earth Mines, North-Point’s economic development vice president, has said his company plans to construct three buildings over three years with the following square footage: 1.3 million, 367,000 and 507,000.

One of the buildings, Dziak said, will be 1,200 to 2,000 square feet.

Earth Mines intends to develop a mix of residential, industrial and public open space after it is cleaned up, said Earth Conservancy Executive Director Mike Dziak. Between 400 and 500 acres must be reclaimed, he said.

“By the time we come into the valley and see those buildings, they really pop,” he said.

Miles said he intends to impress area residents and officials by putting the new 320-acre site back into productive use.

“The elected officials saw the work we did at Hanover Ridge, and it’s been a big success,” he said.

Driskel expects approximately 1,500 homes to be occupied by athletic apparel maker Adidas and Patagonia Inc., an environmentally conscious American company that sells outdoor clothing.

“Adidas is a pretty area for residential and commercial development, especi- ally in Sugar Notch,” he said. “We had to get infrastructure in there in a cost efficient way,” he said.

While it may take years, he said, the project will materialize because he believes developmental interest in this area is the highest since his organization acquired 16,000 acres of former Blue Coal land in the early 1990s.

As an improved economy, the elimination of many unprofitably mining remnants and the area’s proximity to major highways are some reasons for the change, he said.

“For a number of years it was very bad, and we had nobody knocking on the door. Now we have a lot of interest,” Dziak said.

This campaign has sold or donated more than half of its holdings for residential and commer- cial development or to be kept as green space.

More than 2,000 acres was reclaimed, and anoth- er 2,000 must be cleaned up before it can be used for new development or recreation, he said.

The effort to preserve pristine land and address environmental hazards and repurpose mine land for new uses is helping to transform the region, he said.

“This is a great opportu- nity for the area to both grow and clean up the mess,” Dziak said.

In a recent interview, Miles said his company has submitted building plans and expects zoning approval to start up soon, which would allow a groundbreaking in several weeks.

Miles plans to start construction of two buildings that should be completed in early 2019.

“This will be a busy summer for us,” he said.

NorthLight’s Chevvy.com — provides business basics videos and podcasts to get experts and mentors to coach small business owners and entrepreneurs on how to turn their ideas into operational business- ness.

• Intern — links college students to the businesses community to provide hands-on learning experi- ences and brighten the future of the entrepreneurial business com- munity.

• Honor — channels the region’s large veteran population to bridge their great training in the military and leverage that expertise to the entrepreneur- ial business community.

Youn Gendron said Wilko-Barre Connect is creating the infrastructure to connect businesses and create the jobs.

Maximize the diversity, the success and the sustainabil- ity of why the Wilko-Barre region is good for business, good for growth and a solid investment into the future.

For more information, contact the Wilko-Barre Connect at 570-991-6388 or on Twitter @ WilkoBarreConnect.
Business in NEPA. That can help them to grow their existing businesses by partnering with the Chamber's Wilkes-Barre Business Association, along with the local colleges to plan and promote community events which will bring more residents and visitors downtown," George said. "I believe that the downtown businesses do a great job- across-promoting each other." The mayor said the city has a wide variety of restaurants, and the diversity of the cuisine continues to grow. Also, he said more small and medium businesses are launching or expanding downtown and therefore investing in the city.

Downtown living
Luxury living has become a major part of the downtown in recent years and the mayor sees many benefits as a result. "The growing number of downtown residents provides a city lifestyle — one in which residents live, work, dine, shop and enjoy the arts and entertainment in just a few short blocks," George said. "Downtown residents contribute to the city's economy and help to fill the vacancies in buildings which are now being rented by private firms." So with more people living downtown and more to do, what are the next steps in returning that "vibrancy" that everybody wants?

The mayor says the best way to improve the downtown is to partner with the restaurants, shops, entertainment venues, and community events that take place in the downtown and throughout the city.

"We are actively working with the Chamber of Commerce, Diamond City Partnership and the Downtown Wilkes-Barre Business Association, along with the local colleges to plan and promote community events which will bring more residents and visitors downtown," George said. "I believe that the downtown businesses do a great job-promoting each other." The mayor said the city has a wide variety of restaurants, and the diversity of the cuisine continues to grow. Also, he said more small and medium businesses are launching or expanding downtown and therefore investing in the city.

Future and new businesses
Mayor George said he and his team are always moving forward. He said the downtown's success is in the breadth of dining, entertainment and shopping options and the business-friendly atmosphere.

"Additionally, a strong police presence adds to the safety of the downtown," he said. "The biggest improvement to the downtown will be the empty stores, offices and apartments." Mayor George said technology is constantly changing. "And as a community, we need to stay on top of it," he said. "While investing in technology, we must also continue to support our brick-and-mortar businesses."

Franklin’s Restaurant, adjacent to Rodano’s, in downtown Wilkes-Barre.

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From page 8
Wilkes-Barre

All One Resource has also moved its headquarters into the city, bringing close to 50 jobs.

"The Wilkes-Barre THINK Center gives companies a launching pad, complete with support from the business community. The Chamber’s Wilkes-Barre Connect initiative is continuing to assist startups and existing businesses by partnering with them to provide services that can help them to grow in NEPA.

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The Business Association, along with the local colleges to plan and promote community events which will bring more residents and visitors downtown,” George said. “I believe that the downtown businesses do a great job-promoting each other.” The mayor said the city has a wide variety of restaurants, and the diversity of the cuisine continues to grow. Also, he said more small and medium businesses are launching or expanding downtown and therefore investing in the city.

Future and new businesses
Mayor George said he and his team are always moving forward. He said the downtown's success is in the breadth of dining, entertainment and shopping options and the business-friendly atmosphere.

"Additionally, a strong police presence adds to the safety of the downtown,” he said. “The biggest improvement to the downtown would be to fill empty stores, offices and apartments.” Mayor George said technology is constantly changing. “And as a community, we need to stay on top of it,” he said. "While investing in technology, we must also continue to support our brick-and-mortar businesses."

Franklin’s Restaurant, adjacent to Rodano’s, in downtown Wilkes-Barre.

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“This is where we want to be”

Third generation taking charge at Dundee Gardens

By Mary Therese Biebel
mbiebel@timesleader.com

John Zembruski, moved and her husband, attorney Maggie Sheehy-Zembruski, arranged a display of candles that come with wildflower seeds that can be planted in a Mason jar and learning your own little terrarium in putting up potatoes and onion sets to plant this time of year and explorthe stock at Dundee Gardens on the Sans Souci Parkway. “The annuals and perennials and fruit trees are here.” “We’re thinking spring.”

Sheehy-Zembruski’s grandchildren, who were born in the last three years, have the benefit of having a garden and being able to help out. She said, explaining that she for Christmas. “This is a praying mantis — in the glass jars. When the eggs hatched, she intended to release them outdoors, where the mantises would eat many insects. “They’re wonderful pest control,” she said.

The educator was also taking care of a chrysalis, from which she expected a Luna moth to emerge in a few days. Their sole purpose is to she intended to show the children. “Anywhere from 50 to 200 eggs could hatch, maybe as many as 500.”

Similar activities are becoming popular for children’s birthday parties, Sheehy-Zembruski said, explaining parents can arrange a party at Dundee Gardens and bring the

A resource for businesses not business as usual

By Jerry Lynett
jlynett@timesleader.com

Sue Reilly, executive director of the Family Business Alliance at Wilkes University and Penn State Scranton, has been involved in the small family-owned businesses. So that it’s not a business that then you walk away from at 5 o’clock. It comes home to the dinner table and that conversation continues.

They have their own unique challenges, business given that they are family businesses. So that it’s not a business that then you walk away from at 5 o’clock. It comes home to the dinner table and that conversation continues.

Sheehy-Zembruski’s great-grandparents founded it in 1936. John Zembruski, moved and her husband, attorney Maggie Sheehy-Zembruski, arranged a display of candles that come with wildflower seeds that can be planted in a Mason jar and learning your own little terrarium in putting up potatoes and onion sets to plant this time of year and exploring the stock at Dundee Gardens on the Sans Souci Parkway. “The annuals and perennials and fruit trees are here.” “We’re thinking spring.”

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JESSUP — While surrounded by what seemed like miles and miles of equipment dedicated to sorting, washing, drying and finally shipping linens back to their customers, the president of Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply summed up the company’s mission rather succinctly.

“If it wasn’t dirty, they wouldn’t need us,” P.J. Dempsey said.

For nearly 60 years, his family’s company has been operating here in Northeastern Pennsylvania, providing laundry and other services to businesses.

The business was founded back in 1959 by P.J.’s father, Patrick. The older Dempsey started the company just to do laundry, and started providing uniforms in 1980.

Through this, Kristin, the company’s vice president, spoke to the Times Leader about where their success comes from.

“I think it comes down to luck. — they also said a lot of it comes down to luck. "Our business is a good barometer of the economy," P.J. said, noting that businesses could, if they felt so inclined, do their own laundry. “We’re very valuable when they’re focused on their own business.”

The Dempseys acknowledge that theirs isn’t the largest company of its sort, but do say that it’s growing. "Acquisition has been an avenue for growth," P.J. said, adding that they’re always considering "one or two" other facilities.

Over time, Dempsey began scooping up other similar companies, and now has facilities based throughout this part of the Mid-Atlantic region, including in cities such as Harrisburg, Bethlehem and Baltimore.

Through these facilities, Dempsey is able to service most of the eastern half of Pennsylvania, along with parts of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia, in addition to being environmentally friendly.

"Every business wants to be able to tap into a whole new workforce: millennials. “Our clients don’t always care if it’s green, but this matters to a millennial workforce,” she said, explaining that the company’s commitment to being environmentally friendly has attracted younger workers to it.

But P.J. said, like many businesses, the workers are the hurdles, whether they’re millennials or not.

“Every business wants to have friendly, helpful people,” he said. “But we make sure we have friendly, helpful people in an effective system.”

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I wouldn’t call it an overnight success. Ours is more of a slow growth.

Chuck Cohen, Benco Dental managing director

NEPA helps family-owned Benco grow nationwide

Company started as a ‘small dental distribution’ operation

By Patrick Kernan | pkernan@timesleader.com

ITTSTON — If you’ve been to a dentist at some point in the past 90 years or so — and the odds of that are pretty good — you may have been worked on with supplies from Benco Dental.

Since 1930, the Pittston-based company has been faithfully serving the dentists of the area and, as time went on, eventually dentists all around the nation.

Chuck Cohen, the company’s managing director, said 1930 is when his grandfather moved to the Wyoming Valley from Philadelphia and set up shop with what Cohen called a “small dental distribution” operation.

Since then, the company has stayed local and family-owned, being operated by only three generations of Cohen’s family in the 88 years since its founding.

According to Cohen, Benco Dental has a 12 percent market share nationwide, meaning roughly three out of every 25 dentists around the country are supplied by products from Benco.

And if we’re talking about local dentists, that number ticks up closer to three out of every 10 dentists.

But Cohen said that it took some time to reach those numbers.

“I wouldn’t call it an overnight success,” Cohen said. “Ours is more of a slow growth.”

That growth began in the 1950s, when Benco first started servicing dentists outside of the immediate area. The company slowly grew from that point, eventually beginning to market to west coast dentists just this decade.

But Cohen said that it took some time to reach those numbers.

“There’s just really good people,” he said. “Every business is a people business. We have 500 people who work with us, and we can’t run without those people.”

A dentist specializing in pediatrics could choose to fill their office with woodland creatures that can be brought to life through augmented reality on a smartphone app. Radzyminski says dentists’ eyes light up when they see all the options available to them.

“They totally go gek out,” she said with a laugh.

And some of it is pretty high tech.

Julie Radzyminski, vice president at family-owned Benco Dental in Pittston, holds up a device used to scan patients’ teeth.

By Patrick Kernan | pkernan@timesleader.com

Julie Radzyminski, vice president at Benco Dental, stands by a piece of state-of-the-art dental equipment in the company’s showroom in Pittston.

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Kindness, quality keys to success at Jack Williams

By Paul Sokoloski
psokoloski@timesleader.com

From a small store in Kingston, Bill Williams has grown his business into an expanding tire giant that has become the largest independent tire and auto dealer in Pennsylvania. And he’s not done building the Jack Williams Tire & Auto brand.

“We just want to continue to grow,” said Bill Williams, the franchise’s chairman, CEO and longtime leader of his family-owned and operated company. “As long as we’re comfortable with the growth we have and we can control it. We’ve got a couple places under construction, a couple places we’re looking at.”

That expansion has changed the look of the old Jack Williams Tire and transformed the moderate tire store his father, Jack Williams, opened in Kingston with a $500 loan from his father in 1929 into a 36-store conglomerate with more than 800 employees.

For proof of that, Jack Williams President Scott Williams, Bill’s son, points to one room in the company’s spacious corporate headquarters filled with monitors displaying orders from more than 5,000 customers in its territory — which includes service centers mainly in Pennsylvania and other warehouses in New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland.

In another part of the building, another map marks a dot on another screen, tracking the progress of a stream of trucks en route to making deliveries through the eastern United States.

Just off the housing area, where some 130,000 tires are stored, a long row is filled with customer service personnel continually tied up taking phone requests for some 16 tire brands Jack Williams carries. That’s a lot of demand for a company that has sustained success and longevity for nearly 90 years. “I think a lot of it is our passion for the business,” said Jack Williams Vice President Jason Williams, also Bill’s son. “We just stay up on the industry.”

Their staying power has spurred a growth that has moved the company’s main building around. The Jack Williams corporate headquarters went from Kingston during its formative years to its current home in Avoca in 1988. But it has also re-energized the loyalty and devotion Jack Williams Tire and Auto has always shown, along with its intent to remain centered in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

“We’ve had no reason to move our headquarters,” said Bill Williams, who lives in Larksville with his wife, Sandi. “We’ve kept expanding the whole way. But this is where we live. This is where our families are. There’s no reason to move from the area.”

Well, they did move that once, taking a short ride up the road from the Wyoming Valley’s West Side in 1988 to set up shop just off Interstate 81. But that was, as Bill Williams described it, a natural progression to help generate opportunity.

“We relocated to grow the business,” Bill Williams said. “We wanted to get between the Scranton and Wilkes-Barre market and get better access to the highway. It was just a logical move.”

Since then, Jack Williams Tire & Auto opened a 10th location in the Wyoming Valley and Bill Williams has relinquished much of the day-to-day operations to his children Scott, Jason and Tracey.
Artful service to furniture buyers

Third-generation owner provides unique experience to customers

Now the third-generation owner of her family business takes pride in providing unique, often one-of-a-kind furniture to her customers at a discounted price, and she looks back on these early experiences in her “playground” as the beginning of her education in the industry.

“I didn’t think I was learning anything, but I was learning about customer service, just by what my parents did, how they treated a disgruntled customer and how they handled a pleasant customer.”

The original Duryea store was opened by Kur-lancheek’s grandfather, Jacob Kur-lancheek, in 1908, and became known as an establishment that served working-class people.

“Coal miners would pay off pieces of furniture $5 at a time, and my grandfather would pick up payments in a horse and buggy,” Kurlancheek said. “People bought good furniture back then because you bought it for life.”

After being raised with the industry all around her, Kurlancheek attended college in New York City, majoring in textile design and interior design.

“I had no intention of getting into the family business at that point,” she said. “After graduation, I came home and had no idea what to do. I started making silver jewelry in a studio space my parents allowed me to work in.”

Then one day, Kurlancheek’s father was down a sales person and made his daughter fill in out of necessity.

“I sold a couple an entire special order living room, and I was thrilled,” she said. “It was an instant sense of accomplishment.”

When Kurlancheek broke into the industry full time, it was 1980, and the working climate was not favorable to women in any industry, which Kurlancheek said, motivated her to work harder than her male counterparts.

“You had to be tougher and stronger than the men you were dealing with, because you had so much working against you,” she said.

At the time, Kurlancheek and her brother, Paul, were partners and decided to expand the business to four locations that sold predominantly Broyhill furniture, which Kurlancheek described as “very mainstream” and “middle end.”

“We were pretty much like any store, but more kooky and fun,” she said. “And that’s when Raymour & Flanigan came into the area. They were gigantic and powerful, and we had no idea how to compete.”

Kurlancheek’s brother, See FURNITURE | 11

Ronne Kurlancheek has vivid memories of growing up in her parents’ furniture store in Duryea.

“It was my playground,” she said, seated comfortably inside her Wilkes-Barre Township store, Kur-lancheek Home Furnishings.

“Until one day, I was jumping on the mattresses and ripped one. Then I wasn’t allowed near them for a while. One time, I fell into the loading dock, and that’s the day I learned about recycling.”

Kurlancheek offers a variety of furniture made from reclaimed pieces of bedroom boxes, forgemend, and this dresser’s top, background.

Aimee Dilger|Times Leader

Ronne Kurlancheek and her dog Dolly pose for a photo in the Kur-lancheek Home Furnishings showroom in Wilkes-Barre Township. Kurlancheek’s hands-on approach to selecting furniture and consulting her customer base allows her to compete with less personal corporate stores.

By Matt Mattei | mmattei@timesleader.com

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Northeast Sight Services celebrating 100 years of helping visually impaired

By Geri Gibbons | For Times Leader

“...we serve several counties, and we serve clients from Upper Luzerne County and from areas of Wyoming, Wayne and Pike counties,” she said. “Most importantly, we serve not only the blind, but also those with visual impairment.”

Both Gorgone Peperno and Amy Feldman, director of development, are at the helm of the organization which has embraced change and growth in order to better the lives of its clients.

Both are especially excited about the organization’s renovated Vision Resource Center, which they say is a one-stop shop for practical tools that enhance work, home life and leisure.

Staff from Northeast Sight Services walk clients of all ages through the process of choosing devices and aids that will be most helpful to them.

“Our clients prefer going high tech tools to assist them in daily living,” Gorgone said.

The mission of the Northeast Sight Services is to help blind and visually impaired individuals achieve the best possible quality of life by providing compassionate services and to prevent vision loss through education and early detection for people of all ages. Northeast Sight Services is a nonprofit organization that serves Northeast Pennsylvania, including Luzerne, Wyoming, Wayne, and Pike counties.

Its Social Service programs are offered to individuals who are legally blind or have low vision, which is defined as having a visual acuity of 20/70 or worse in the better eye with best correction or a corresponding field loss. With the goal of improving the quality of one’s life and maintaining his/her independence, the Northeast Sight Services offers the following services:

• Adjustment to Vision Loss
• In-Home Support
• Independent Living and Social Events
• Prevention of Blindness programs

Its Prevention of Blindness programs are offered to people of all ages and demographics. These programs are focused on helping prevent blindness locally.

• Vision Screenings (for both children and adults)
• Health and Safety Education programs (for both children and adults)

The Marilyn Monroe Maddow Vision Resource Center assures that individuals in our local communities have access to sight, whether it be through a high powered magnifier from the Vision Resource Center or a basic pair of affordable prescription frames.

Insight Labs Club of NEPA is a program organized in partnership with Community Services for Sight for blind and visually impaired clients to get through the process of choosing devices and aids that will be most helpful to them.

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Bill Jones is president and CEO of the United Way of Wyoming Valley.

By Geri Gibbons

WILKES-BARRE — Bill Goldsworthy has been acting as executive director of the Red Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania since 2015, and has been serving the community throughout his life.

And although the organization’s mission of disaster relief is certainly a serious one, Goldsworthy injects humor and humanity into the position, even as he arrives at his desk each morning at the organizations center in Wilkes-Barre.

“I always have a bowl of candy, pretzels, on my desk, and I tell people the door is always open,” he said. “So that our volunteers get to know me.”

Goldsworthy detailed the organization’s quick response to recent nor’easters that found many area residents without power, especially those in the Scranton area.

He emphasized that both volunteers and paid staff seamlessly shifted their efforts from our area to the Poconos in the biggest response since Hurricane Sandy in 2013.

“An effective disaster management isn’t a matter of simply effective response; it’s about helping people understand how the organization’s mission of safety and preparedness can help them and others in their workplace, and to that end, it’s about helping people understand the value of our work and how our new model is influencing positive change,” he said.

Another partner recently documented how volunteers helped someone in their workplace.

“Thats powerful.”

One misconception Jones would like to address is the amount of work that goes into what we do, and how the United Way do, as well as how difficult it is to keep an organization going.

Despite the criticism he can sometimes get, he and the United Way of Wyoming Valley are proud to have recently merged with the Berwick Area United Way in an effort to better serve the overall area.

“The criticisms we get are largely from people who don’t understand the complexity and difficulty of our work,” he said. “I would invite anyone who has concerns about the United Way or who won’t support our work today because of negative experiences in the past to call me. If you have criticisms but really care about and want to support our community, let’s meet and have a respectful conversation.”

“No one is perfect, but the United Way is an organization that truly saves lives.”
The three state parks in Luzerne County have more than 58 miles of hiking trails, combined. There is plenty of room to walk, but that’s not all there is to do at these state parks.

Nescopeck, Ricketts Glen and Frances Slocum state parks are diverse natural areas that offer activities reflecting each park’s unique qualities. At Ricketts Glen, for example, visitors can enjoy the Glen Natural Area, which includes the Falls Trail System that winds past 22 waterfalls. The highest of the waterfalls display in the M蓟四eau Gavages Falls, which is surrounded by old-growth forest.

Frances Slocum is popular for its 245-acre lake, picnic areas and trails that are open to mountain biking. And at Nescopeck, visitors can explore 3,550 acres of diverse wildlife habitats, fish in Lake Frances and Nescopeck Creek or enjoy one of the numerous nature programs at the state’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, said Diane Muhl, environmental education specialist supervisor with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

“We try to offer programs and activities consistent with every group to reach different audiences,” she said. “Some people come in and stay the weekend, at which point we typically attract local residents who want to try something different.”

One of the most popular activities at all three state parks is the monthly hiking series, which is now in its 30th year.

“People start売りing on a different hike every month, highlight-

ing a particular trails in a state park or on other public property, such as game lands.

“There’s no shortage of places to go,” Muhl said. “The goal of the hiking series is to get people outdoors to exercise, learn about natural history and explore the public lands we have.”

By the end of the year, there are plenty of other activities offered through DCNR’s Get Outdoors PA program. Created in 2013, the program offers an opportunity to try backpacking, hiking, bird-watching, cross-country skiing, fishing and hunting, among other activities.

“People can try before making the decision to purchase equipment on their own,” Muhl said. “We provide the equipment and they can try it out. We do it in a relaxed setting and teach them techniques and how the equipment works, Muhl said.”

Still, with several lakes nearby, kayaking, hiking or geocaching, the three state parks have plenty of opportunities to tap into the parks have plenty of fishing remains one of the popular activities at all three state parks in Luzerne County. The 165-acre lake is popular with boaters and anglers and is located in the Back Mountain.

“Kayaking programs fill up every time they’re offered, according to Muhl, and the spring bird watching takes lakes attract upwards of 30 people. Still, with several lakes and streams on the three state parks in the county, fishing remains one of the most popular activities.

As a result, Muhl said, the parks have plenty of programs to tap into the interest in angling. At Frances Slocum, the Back Mountain Police Association hold a trout derby every spring for kids. In addition, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission stocks trout in the lake, which also holds healthy populations of bass, panfish and even enormous muskies.

At Nescopeck, Lake Frances and a small stretch of Nescopeck Creek are also stocked with trout. And the 245-acre Lake Jean at Ricketts Glen, which was recently re-filled following repair work, is a popular spot for paddling and ice anglers in the winter.

When it comes to trout, however, fly fishing is a popular activity at Nescopeck, the park partners with the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the PBRC to hold various programs designed to get people into fishing. And they all draw a crowd.

A recent Introduction to Fly Fishing program at Nescopeck was so popular that there was a waiting list, Muhl said.

Whether it’s trout, kayaking, hiking or geocaching, the three state parks in Luzerne County offer a wide array of opportunities to enjoy.

“We’re trying to cover all the bases,” Muhl said. “Everything we do is to encourage a conservation message.”
**From page 11**

**Furniture**

**From page 5**

who said she wasn’t in love with the industry, decided he was missed, and she didn’t want to run the stores by herself, so the siblings closed their branches and Rome went back to school.

When she returned to her family’s namesake, she went to work in the flagship store, which moved to Easton, and managed the warehouse under the ownership of Lou Domiano, but in 2005, she bought the business back from Domiano and has since devised a business plan that not only survives in the era of corporate furniture stores but also sets Kuehne House Furniture apart from those franchised outlets.

The Willis-Barre Township store has a funky, artsy vibe that is as much akin to a gallery as it is a furniture retailer.

“We never put tables, or a sofa and loveseat that match together,” Kuehne said. “We love doing the opposite of our competition. Kuehne can survive on everyone’s big box stores have annoyed.”

Kuehne and her architect husband, Joel Zitofsky, travel together to places like the High Museum, the Wilfrid-Ellen Petherbridge in Atlanta, and the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., to look at work and to purchase it.

“Since starting at the store, I’ve gone to school to master the challenges of visual impairment.”

The organization also provides tools to prevent vision loss and enhance vision, which include vision screenings and educational presentations to school-age children.

Both Feldman and Gorgone Peperno work to find ways to change the scope of the organization – to reach more people in need and ensure they receive vital services.

“…since starting at Northeast Sight Services, we spent a lot of time evaluating every aspect of the organization to see what was working and what wasn’t,” said Feldman. “Over time, changes were made and we continually look to enhance and expand important services.”

Last year, the organization served about 6,000 people.

Both Feldman and Gorgone Peperno work with the staff, who they say work so hard to create a collaborative spirit, making every success possible.

Reach the Times Leader at 570-829-7242 or on Twitter @TLJerryLynott.

**FBA**

**From page 1**

she was director of Professional Continuing Education and Director of Career Development at Easton Area High School.

The 20th anniversary program at Mohogan “Penn on the Move” will feature James Fendrock, a down-and-out, rough-hewn kind of person who is lauded by several as a model for what can be accomplished by using major corporations, as the keynote speaker.

“You are welcome to join us for one session and check us out. And then it is by membership,” Reilly said.

The FBA has three membership categories and corresponding annual fees.

• Firms with 10 or fewer employees, $500.
• Firms with 11 or more employees, $1,200.

Benefits include tuition discounts, 15 percent to 20 percent membership level, at Wilkes and Penn State, and unlimi...

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Dundee Gardens carries a wide range of products for the home and garden, as well as gifts ranging from clothing to mulling spices to cutting boards. Pepperment oil, that serves home decor and even such flowers and herbs, rustic minter, which could bring information for the natural environment for the educator and craft supplies.

From page 1

Most two上门dentists who continuously bring excellence in general and cosmetic dentistry to the communities of beautiful Northeast Pennsylvania.

Dr. Carpenter, who has obtained laser is a good example. Dentistry has made terrific strides, relaxed, and safe. Staying current want patients to feel comfortable, confides Dr. Carpenter. “Here, we “I was a ‘dental phobic’ as a child, ” advises Dr. Chas, a nutrition. “It’s important to first assure the health of your mouth before you invest in cosmetic work,’ advises Dr. Chas, a nutrition. “It’s important to first assure the health of your mouth before you invest in cosmetic work.’

Celebrating Dazzling, Healthy Smiles For 20 Years!

Carpenter Dental.com

Williams

From page 4

Williams DeRoche, who is also a company vice president. Together, they’ve developed a simple approach while acquiring a reputation of reliability and a secret to sustaining the successes that has helped Jack Williams Tire & Auto remain the leading tire distributor in Northwestern Pennsylvania.

“Jack Williams Tire & Auto began using during an all campaign in 2015. The third-generation Williams children today try to live by. For all of them, there was really no choice.

“All of us sort of grew up in the business,” said Jason Williams, who said he once considered other career opportunities but found himself drawn to the tire and auto business. “We definitely weren’t forced. My first job was mounting tires, loading decks.”

“We all learned from the ground up,” Tracey Williams DeRoche said. Many of their drives for the business was in their blood from the time they were born.

“I worked in it while I was going to school,” said Williams. “I liked it. I had no other go to anywhere else. They (his children) all worked with me, during school and during college. It’s the only place they have ever worked.”

The needs of their customers and the quality of their work have changed over the years.

“They see a lot of bigger tires, narrow sidewalls,” Jason Williams said. “A lot of it is performance-oriented. A lot of safety improvements, too, for handling. Then you have high-performance (tires) for faster vehicles.”

Through it all, the performance of Jack Williams Tire & Auto has remained the same.

“This is where we all grew up,” said Tracey Williams. “For us, this is it.”

Reach Paul Sokoloski at 570-829-7143 or on Twitter @ Paul5708297143.

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Expansion shows Commonwealth commitment to area
By Geri Gibbons

WILKES-BARRE — The unveiling of a $400 million expansion of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit earlier this year is a testament to Commonwealth Health’s commitment to continuing to offer quality healthcare services to area residents and to its continuing growth, according to Chief Executive Officer Cornelio Catena.

The state-of-the-art intensive care and cardiovascular unit, deemed the “ICU tower,” added two stories to the structure of the hospital and now provides 34 rooms for patient intensive care.

The project also included the addition of another helipad to the hospital’s existing one.

Another addition to the hospital is a Nivo robot-assisted system for knee replacement to the orthopedic surgery department, which does hip, knee, shoulder and spinal surgery.

The hospital’s orthopedic department, which offers “care for the parts that keep you moving,” includes care for a wide variety of conditions ranging from arthritis to sports injuries to stress-related injuries.

Catena said that much of the hospital’s growth and expansion had nothing to do with bricks and mortar, but rather with attracting quality primary care doctors and specialists to the healthcare system, focusing on both technology and expertise of those providing care to patients.

For example, the hospital has added highly qualified surgeons and physicians to Level II Trauma Center.

The hospital has also upgraded the scope of its GI services, both in numbers served and types of procedure offered.

According to Catena, plans is remodel and expand the hospitals GI suite are in the works.

The hospital also operates a rapid-response emergency, which addresses those in a mental health crisis, providing stabilization during a stay of up to 72 hours.

Another improvement to the healthcare system is the addition of “OnStarCare,” an online opportunity for patients to schedule appointments at urgent care centers, primary care doctors offices or the emergency room.

“Patients really appreciate just being able to walk in and be seen,” said Catena.

Catena emphasized that Commonwealth Health views any expansion or addition to staff in terms of improving quality health care services available to their patients.

“We always want to be able to provide state-of-the-art care to our patients, so they don’t have to go out of the area,” he said.

In Luzerne County, in addition to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, Commonwealth Health also operates First Hospital, a psychiatric facility, and Geisinger, a drug and alcohol facility, both in Kingston.

Healthcare system is also planning a cancer center within the next two years.

Other current and ongoing projects and happenings at the healthcare center include:

• A $1.2 million MAKO robotics-assisted technology for knee and hip replacement projects at GWV.

• An Urgent Care opens in Geisinger Earlier Clinic.

• New GWV spiritual care center in the lobby to provide peaceful environment for patients and families.

• A new Memory and Cognition program (formerly Aging Brain Clinic), which includes a driving simulator, gait analyzer and family-oriented exam rooms.

• A Mamava nursing suite at GWV, which allows hospital visitors a private space to breast feed.

• Geisinger was named official healthcare provider of the State University of New York at Ulster.

• Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation is offering a $3 million gift for the Wilkes-Barre Hospital Foundation to help support the hospital’s efforts toward pediatric cancer research.

• A Family-Centered Care program for patients and parents.

• A $2.9 million, 3,900-square-foot, 10-bed Observation Unit for specialized, streamlined patient care.

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KINGSTON — In 13 years, Nick Duvall went from selling leather goods out of his home to a brick-and-mortar storefront on Wyoming Avenue.

Duvall, owner of Duvall Leatherwork, got started in leather work through sadness.

He said he had always worked with leather as a kid. “It was like my hobby,” he said. “So I’m partially apprenticed trained and partially self-taught.”

Duvall, who is originally from southern Pennsylvania, moved to the area and after working a job he wasn’t thrilled with, decided to start the business.

“I did the leather work as a side job, and I really liked it, and when I was 25 years old, I started my business,” he said. “And I never looked back.”

In 2005, Duvall Leatherwork opened in 2006. “Within a year, Duvall found the Wyoming Avenue storefront, and the brick-and-mortar shop opened in 2006. Duvall said he wouldn’t have considered a different market to start his business in, citing the cost of production, workforce and market size.

“This is a great place to conduct business,” he said. “It’s fairly inexpensive to operate, there’s a large enough workforce that’s eager to work and do a skilled job.”

Duvall said the company branched out into modern leather gear around 2012. He said they started out with a very niche product and market and have since expanded into creating everyday items.

“That’s just been nothing but a boon since all that started,” he said.

His store is full of wallets, bags, belts, coasters, wine caddies and a plethora of other handmade goods, with work stations set up in the back to manufacture the products sold.

Duvall said the business has multiple avenues of sales, as well as contract work and business-to-business sales. “We have a full e-commerce website,” he said.

“We focused on civil-war era leather goods,” he said. “With that said, quite a bit of our work at that time was for the military and National Parks Service.”

In 2006, Duvall found the Wyoming Avenue storefront, and the brick-and-mortar shop opened. Duvall said he wouldn’t have considered a different market to start his business in, citing the cost of production, workforce and market size.

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Customers can purchase all the products Duvall has to offer through the website. One of his biggest forms of sales is the art festivals, Duvall said.

“We do about 15 to 20 shows a year between May and early November,” he said.

That’s a huge market for us,” he said.

Duvall said this year, they have shows set up from Rochester, N.Y., down to Washington, D.C.

He said going out to shows is a great way for him to meet customers. “The shows are a really great time for me to advertise,” he said.

He also has business clients across the country. “They do business-to-business transactions, such as making leather pads for salons, as well as contract work such as manufacturing wallets for businesses. “It’s just a never-ending stream of things to do,” he said.

One of the most popular products they make are wallets, Duvall said. “We make a tremendous amount of wallets,” he said.

The process begins with the leather, which Duvall said he purchases from all over the world. For his wallets, he said he mainly uses leather from England, but he also purchases leather from the United States, Mexico and South America, as well as other areas.

“Operators have to be able to cut all the parts, and bring it together,” he said.

Then, the wallets are shipped to clients, taken to shows or put out in the store.

“We only sell the products we make,” Duvall said.

He added that the company is providing practical items for everyday life.

“We make consumer leather goods that people use and carry every single day,” he said.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Duvall Leatherwork right at home

By Brigid Edmunds | Times Leader

Owner: NEPA perfect place to grow his business

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Eight years ago, Abby Singh opened Canteen 900 with the small goal of having an income to put shoes on her son’s feet.

Today, the Kingston native has six feet to put shoes on, plus a family of employees and custom- ers reliant on the eatery. “When you work in the restaurant industry the people you work with become family,” Singh said. “We really made our customers our family too.”

Canteen 900 opened in October 2010. In late summer 2017, Singh and her husband, Bhanu Singh, opened Canteen Park. Canteen Park is in the former Cottman Transmission building at 181 N. Market St. in Kingston. It overlooks the pond at Kirby Park. “We love sharing the view of the park,” Abby Singh said. “We wanted to be part of Market Street. It was laid out in the 1800s that inspired us to take an old service station and turn it into something cool.”

The couple found a lot of support for their business idea from their employees and custom- ers. “I take a lot of work … a lot of cleaning,” Singh said, noting the building smelled like grease and gas.

The Canteen family chipped in and incor- porated Canteen 900’s urban atmosphere to the new location, including a mural by local artist and employee Jake Snell. “Jake did the mural at Canteen 900 too,” Singh said. “Everything at Canteen Park (Canteen Park) is done by an employee.”

For example, menu items for both restaur- ants are developed by Michael Davies, she said. Alex Mayer and Josie Snell created Canteen Park’s jersey. AllLucina

The restaurant also features a unique beer tap made out of a large industrial looking pipe. “There are only two of a Fermac- table program, which provides fresh veg- etables, herbs and meats provided by local farms. Both Canteen Park and Canteen 900 offer a chil- dren’s menu. Also, Canteen Park also features a variety of nightly entertainment, including bands and special events, such as a wine and cheese night set for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on May 3 and a tattoo contest on June 8, Lacina said.

Challenges Managing two res- taurants can pose a challenge, but Singh said the staff embraced the view of the park,” Singh said. “We really made our customers our family too.”

Abby Singh expands Canteen’s brand

The outdoor dining area at Canteen Park in Kingston, which is famous for its beer and wine list, is right here,” Singh said about the tap system. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, which is when Canteen 900 closes. For a full list of hours and menus visit www.canteen900.com or www.canteen- park.com.

“When one door closes the others open,” Singh said. “I am always planning two meals ahead. So when you are eating breakfast, I am already planning din- ner.”

Many of Canteen 900 employees also work at Canteen Park, so their brand of customized customer service continues. “Our staff knows regu- lar customers needs and preferences,” Singh said, such as who has a dairy or gluten allergies. Menu options also vary between the two eateries.

Both restaurants are

By Eileen Godin | egodin@timesleader.com

Eileen Godin is grateful for the support of all the local restaurants. “There is something for everyone.”

Reach Eileen Godin at 570-991-80887920 or on Twitter @TLNews.

Sunday, April 29, 2018

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Canteen Park and Canteen 900 owner Abby Singh and manager Michael Davies pose in Canteen Park in Kingston recently.

By Eileen Godin | egodin@timesleader.com

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By Eileen Godin | egodin@timesleader.com

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Brian Stanchak wasn’t flying to Columbus for the Final Four. No, instead he was driving.

But before driving to Columbus, Ohio, Stanchak would make a pit-stop in Jersey City, N.J. to visit Marc Mitchell, one of his clients, he introduced as Saint Peters University’s head women’s basketball coach. Then he would drive back past Wilkes-Barre on route to the NCAA Division 1 Women’s Basketball Championship semifinals in Ohio.

These are the types of days that illustrate why Stanchak decided to open his sports agency, BDS Agency, in the first place.

“It’s everything,” Stanchak said. “My emotions are so up and down every day because if I have a client who wins a game then I’m ecstatic and if I have a client who loses a game then I’m depressed. For me, it’s like my emotions are all over the place because of that. Seeing them reach their goal is unbelievable.

I’m driving two and a half hours in the opposite direction just to go to a half hour press conference just to drive up to New Jersey. I would drive back to Wilkes-Barre to go to Columbus because I want to be there for his special day. I know how hard he worked to get to this point. That never gets old when I get a phone call that ‘I got the job.’”

But Stanchak, 37, didn’t always want to be a sports agent.

As a sports management major at Seton Hall University, Stanchak noticed that he was one of the only students in his class that didn’t want to become a sports agent after school. He was working with the women’s basketball team at the time as a student assistant and video coordinator. Stanchak saw a future in women’s basketball and that’s what he pursued. He made three more steps up the college ranks from the time he graduated from Seton Hall in 2004 until he took his post as director of athletics and recreation at Penn State Wilkes-Barre in 2015.

After returning to his alma mater as an assistant women’s basketball coach for three seasons, Stanchak would soon pursue a different calling.

In 2011, Stanchak would exchange his whistle and basketball for an office. He spent four years as the athletic director at PSU-Wilkes-Barre. It was a change of pace and a different challenge in his life. It was one he enjoyed.

But then thanks to his new administration background, Stanchak started advising some of his friends in the coaching industry when it came time to negotiate contracts.

By the summer of 2015, Stanchak decided to create his agency, The BDS Agency. He continued to work at the university for two more years before he decided to become a sports agent full-time in February 2016.

“It’s funny how things change. I never set out to be a sports agent,” Stanchak said. “What ended up happening was I was advising a lot of my coaching friends that I stayed in touch with when I was an AD on contract negotiations, handling situations with their administrators, interview preparation. As those coaches were having some success then it kind of culminated in me actually starting my own in 2015. I could provide a really unique and intricate value to coaches based on my experience on both sides. That’s when I decided to start my agency.”

Stanchak said. “I think having a better career path. Then it kind of became a sports agent.”

Brian Stanchak started his career as a women’s college basketball coach but now is a sports agent working out of a Wilkes-Barre office building.

Unusual path leads to right spot

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Eileen Song committed to profession, community
By Ed Lewis
elewis@timel.com

WILKES-BARRE — Eileen Song wants to return to Pennsylvania when she graduated high school in 1988, and she has. She is a corporate sponsor of the Marker, Fine Arts Fiesta and the Cherry Blossoms Festival. Those activities are the annual Farmers Market, which she said is a very important business. Paper bags have been made in the same way since the 1860s. The advantages? The new system essentially takes one long strip of paper and cuts it in half, creating the bottom and glue lines together. The bag is more circular or oval, but otherwise works as well as or better than the old style ones.

"It just never clicked," CEO Robson said. "We're a very traditional business. Paper bags have been made in the same way since the 1860s. The advantages? The new system essentially takes one long strip of paper and cuts it in half, creating the bottom and glue lines together. The bag is more circular or oval, but otherwise works as well as or better than the old style ones."

"Phase 2" of the business plan should be done in the next few months so the company can hire people and start making bags in the 42,000 square feet of space being rented. It is already enough demand to "start making them right now," Robson said. He expects to hire about 10 people initially. They can have "glue lines" cut into them or added. They can have handles or pretty much anything except an opening. A bad print, unpredicted pack or bit of rain can make the thing crack open like a punched pineapple. It's pretty much the same service as before, except for the way bags are made since 1860. The advantages? The new system essentially takes one long strip of paper and cuts it in half, creating the bottom and glue lines together. The bag is more circular or oval, but otherwise works as well as or better than the old style ones.

"In designing the paper bag," Robson said. "It's greener; it runs much faster because it uses less raw material, it takes less pallet space. He's not about to reveal the secret of the bag because it shows the state of the art machines about to be installed that, once up and running, can make three bags a second. They can also be made in different sizes and types of bags in as little as 20 minutes, compared with up to 8 hours to switch job types in a regular paper bag factory. "We think we'll be able to get it down to 20 minutes" once workers are familiar with the system, Robson added. The big trick is strikingly simple. While traditional paper bags and these new ones are made from a single sheet of paper, the old bags had elaborate folds making the bottom. There's a lot of origami going on down there," Robson said. "We jumped." The new system essentially takes one long strip of paper and cuts it in half, creating the bottom and glue lines together. The bag is more circular or oval, but otherwise works as well as or better than the old style ones. A traditional bag folds each side inward, immediately forming a one-piece bottom. The bag has four layers of paper (a bag has 15 or 16 layers) and is considerably more, and is folded over those four layers. "You can see the layers in this," he says, holding a traditional bag. The new bags are two layers everywhere except the bottom, folding in one piece for a total of four layers. A retailer who uses millions of bags orders them by the pallet, and a truckload of 7,000 bags can be shipped to an outlet without a single-case return. That's why you can expect to see millions of bags rolling off the line in coming months. It's also why, if Robson finds a good enough reason for it to do so, you may see little Sugar Notch in the Guinness Book of World Records some day. One advantage to the bag manufacturing method is that the length of bag is only limited by the amount of paper in those giant rolls. "We could make a mile-long bag," he said. "That would be the longest machine-made paper bag on record."
By Joe Soprano jsoprano@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — Tucked into the strip mall in the once-beat-up renovated Market Street train station complex is a company that offers a host of services to businesses and retailers and con-
sumers.

In the same complex with a nail salon and a Domino’s Pizza sits The Market Street Business Center.

The center itself holds three separate businesses — Business Office Sys-
tems Inc., Gold Star Dig-
ital Document Services and JTB Billy Boxes.

Developer George Albert has big plans from the complex that hosts the businesses, and owner Jeff Thomas is excited about that.

“We really feel like when the station gets developed all that gets done, we can be in a good position to contin-
ue our business-to-busi-
ness relationships with customers and expand by getting more of that business,” Thomas said.

“In my mind, I kind of wanted to be a part of this,” he said.

“I’ve known George Albert for many years, and I think he is on the right track with this par-
ticular section.”

Thomas is already impressed with the changes to the complex in the past year, which includes new sidewalks and lighting.

“We can see a big dif-
fERENCE, especially with the night lighting,” he said. “This facility is much more welcoming at night.”

Thomas first got into the business in 1989 with Four Star Business Systems, which he called “kind of the parent com-
pany of everything.”

“We sold and serviced Xerox equipment for many years,” Thomas said. “We got into a Xerox agency program. We covered 17 counties in Northeastern and Cen-
tral Pennsylvania and 21 counties in New York.

Eventually, Xerox can-
celled the program.

Thomas opened Gold Star Wide Format in 2001 and acquired Busi-
ness Office Systems in 2006 and later added JT Billyboxes.

“This Market Street Business Center is basically a conglomeration of three businesses,” he said. “Our thought was that we have been in this building for eight years, and it was our under-
standing that the build-
ing is going to become more retail friendly once all the work is done here. And we believe that to be true.

“So we wanted to take out our business model and make it not just a business-to-busi-
ness business model and give it a retail twang to it.”

Thomas believes both retail and business cus-
tomers will notice what sets his businesses apart from others.

“Two things — the scope of our product offering and the depth of our skill set,” Thomas said when asked what people should know about the business cen-
ter.

“We have really smart people working here.”

Thomas was also proud of the work his team does for lawyers.

“We are the people that help lawyers present their cases, developing those cases and helping attorneys,” he said.

“We do a lot of con-
struction drawings for major construction com-
panies,” he said.

Thomas was also glad to sell it to them.

“Thomas said that if a customer wants to buy a copier, he is more than happy to sell it to them. But that’s not his primary objective.

“I don’t want to sell any copiers in Wallenpa-
uck,” he said. “We want to be in a position where we can provide our exist-
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Dave Maloney, co-owner of Axelrad Screen Printing, puts his industrial organizational psychology expertise to work keeping all the moving parts in sync at the Wilkes-Barre company.

"The day before they were due they called to check on them, just like, ‘We’re making sure we’re on track to get our delivery tomorrow.’ I was like, ‘Yeah, no problem.’ The lady just stopped. Somebody else got on the phone like, ‘You’re seriously, you’re done?’ “ Maloney said.

Axelrad’s kept promise not only earned the respect of the client, but also led to new business as word spread about the company. "Our product’s done when we say it’s going to be done,” Maloney said. "And every time we say to obtain a new large customer, it’s because the last guy couldn’t keep up with the demand.”

It’s easier said than done, assured Maloney, but Axelrad’s been able to deliver the goods on time by meshing technology with resources of skilled and committed humans. “Everybody needs to be doing their job right for a shirt to come out the right way," Maloney said.

"And every time we say to obtain a new large customer, it’s because the last guy couldn’t keep up with the demand.”

The 38-year-old Maloney, of Shavertown, should know. He studied business industrial organizational psychology or as he put it, “how to run a business tightly,” and applies his expertise on the job.

"Everybody needs to be doing their job right for a shirt to come out the right way,” Maloney said. "We just plan and grow. "We just plan and grow. It’s easier said than done, assured Maloney, but Axelrad’s been able to deliver the goods on time by meshing technology with resources of skilled and committed humans.

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Christian Wielage is one of several people behind the effort to save the Irem Temple on North Franklin street in Wilkes-Barre.

Christian Wielage has always been a man with a vision. In the mid-1990s, he was a new resident of the Wyoming Valley. Committed to improving the area, the 20-year-old Wielage approached the Irem Temple, which was in need of repairs, and proposed converting it into a performing arts center.

Despite initial resistance from some community members, Wielage persevered. He worked tirelessly to secure funding and gather support. In 2003, the Irem Temple was transformed into the Kirby Center for the Performing Arts, a venue that has hosted a wide array of events, from concerts and musical performances to plays and theatrical productions.

The Kirby Center has become a cornerstone of the local arts community, attracting performers and audiences from all over the region. Its success has sparked a revival of interest in the arts in the Wyoming Valley, leading to the establishment of other performing arts venues and the growth of local talent.

As the Kirby Center continues to thrive, Wielage remains at the forefront of its success, always looking for ways to improve and expand its offerings. His vision for the arts in the Wyoming Valley has helped make the area a more vibrant and dynamic place, and he continues to inspire others to follow his lead in fostering the arts and culture.

By Derek Levarse

Dialing up a new type of business

By Derek Levarse

The popular and powerful financial service provider

Wielage is an active member of the local business community, serving on numerous boards and committees. He is a strong advocate for the arts, and has helped to fund many cultural projects in the area. Wielage is also a respected leader in the business world, having founded his own company, PlanGuru, which provides financial planning software to small businesses.

In addition to his work in the arts, Wielage is passionate about home improvement and has been involved in several projects to revitalize local buildings. He is a strong advocate for sustainability, and has worked to implement energy-efficient practices in his business and personal life.

Wielage is a true Renaissance man, with a broad range of interests and a deep commitment to the betterment of the community. His vision and leadership have helped to make Wilkes-Barre and the Wyoming Valley a more vibrant and dynamic place to live and work.
Think Center is the pre-school of entrepreneurship
By Mark Gaydish
mguydish@timesleader.com
WILKES-BARRE — There are surely still a few in the most dusty corners of the mind who recall Woolworth’s store and its dime “five-and-dime” store chains just off Public Square, a chain successful enough to be bought out of the original “five-and-dime” store chains of downtown, one Woolworth’s store helped a few who remember in fruition, a lot of glitzy downtown staple, including Woolworth’s store, helped where companies could look for subscribers. The platform customers log in to and "CBD-infused ice", and a stack of those round containers to hold "CBD-infused ice" containers. "This is the student's notion that 'basically is pulling data from the shower and figured out how to get you to adjust your body parts," he grinned. "I think the kid who built the gizmo of 12 pairs of plastic cogs were made with a 3-D printer. "They can print candy, plastic cogs were made with a 3-D printer. forces. Those tiny metal parts and plastic bags used in America. That problem, and he is looking to help make that happen as well, Ridley says.

The center embraces disruptive forces. Those tiny metal parts and plastic bags were sold in 2009, eventually re-branded as Pepperjam. Another recent graduate, which eventually sold in 2009, eventually re-branded as Pepperjam.

The center helps by connecting people with experience. It has a patent, or on buying a building or buying a business plan, "He came up with some internet-" Ridley says. "He offered one case study, pointing to "Xenoil," a company who refuses to tell me about it in class when we asked him to work on a business plan," Ridley says. "He came up with some internet-"

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The expansion is really fun and exciting,” Lynn said. “I am learning about new areas of business as I am expanding into them.”

One of her newest clients in the area is Porchlight Eatery where White Haven. The restaurant started serving a new line of flavors in their menu while making as well as making sure to satisfy the dietary needs of the customers. Lynn said she customizes the menu to the taste and preferences of the customers. She offered some new menu items and flavors that are not only popular but also healthy. She explained that she wanted to offer a variety of menu options to meet the needs of the customers.

“I don’t believe that people always say they are going to be eating every day,” she said. “Many people are still eating and staying home.”

The expansion continues to be a challenging experience for Lynn. She explained that the restaurant is not just about the food but also about the ambiance and the service. She said that the restaurant is there to provide a place for people to relax and enjoy their time. She also emphasized the importance of customer feedback and how it helps her in improving the service and the menu. She expressed her gratitude to her customers for their support and for being a part of her journey.
**Western Auto Group making splash**

**By DJ Eberle
dej@emailnews.com**

**PLAINS TWP. —** The combination of the new facilities for their BMW, Subaru and Porsche dealerships and the introduction of Ed Napleton Automotive Group as the new owners has business booming for BMW of Wyoming Valley, Subaru of Wyoming Valley and Porsche Wyoming Valley.

The BMW and Subaru dealerships have been at their new Highway 315 facilities since March 2017, with Porsche having moved into its new Highway 315 home this past October, while the Napleton Auto Group took over in February. Between the new facilities and new owner, Steve Ubaldini Sr., and his three dealerships have been able to take their business to the next level.

“Subaru for example, we’ve had a 25-plus percent increase in business moving to that new location,” Ubaldini, the managing partner of the three dealerships, said. “With all of the dealerships they have kind of scattered around the country, every store you have, everybody learns things, and the nice thing is when something happens you can bounce ideas off of other dealerships and help efficiency at processes and planning.”

Ubaldini’s new ability to help Subaru and Porsche dealerships has come on as the owner of Napleton Automotive Group making splash in the region. Ubaldini said the key to the success of the group is the fundamental belief that the group could be that sincerest form of imitation. "Automated ways of looking at everything," which is something that wasn’t the case in the past. It makes things easier for Ubaldini and his staff. "It’s kind of amazing," Ubaldini said. "They had some repeats that they automatically scan on your used car inventory and let you know if you have any car on your lot that has an open recall that you should get remedied before you sell it. A lot of really pretty, neat stuff that they brought to the table."

One of the biggest takeaways from the Napleton Automotive Group coming on as the owner of BMW, Subaru and Porsche dealerships has been Ubaldini’s new ability to have ideas off of other people who have been in business for a while and have been able to solve those new-found problems. "It’s an opportunity that he might not have had before."

"It’s very helpful," Ubaldini said. "To have somebody that if you have an issue that you can call and you can talk about a problem or opportunity, and to have someone that can say that they’ve experienced it before and, here’s what we did and this was successful, and to give you some insight into how to handle a problem or opportunity.

Not only do the new facilities help Ubaldini keep a huge inventory for his Subaru and Porsche dealerships specifically, but it has improved customer service as well. "They’ve removed two-thirds of their salesmen off of the sales areas — like high-speed WiFi, large-screen televisions, areas for children to go in and play and different refreshments and snacks."

They’ve also added covered service drives that allows customers to roll up and take advantage of when the weather is bad. "Our service drives also now have ‘store-smart’ machines," Ubaldini said. "That means they can measure the depth of the count, how many people the service staff allow to use the car service if their tires aren’t aligned properly and how many service staff gain this knowledge "edge" smoothly or "within seconds."
We’ve been customer-centric since founder Benjamin Cohen opened his one-room dental supply business in the coal region of Northeastern Pennsylvania in 1930.

Ben’s son Larry, our builder, grew Benco into the Mid-Atlantic’s leading distributor by innovating and never taking a customer for granted. Today, Larry’s sons Chuck and Rick are stewards of the family’s nine-decade passion for dentistry.

OUR HERITAGE OF INNOVATION.

1930
Founder Benjamin Cohen, 26, starts Benco in a bank building that houses most of the town’s dental offices.

1968
First: dental distributor to hire an equipment specialist, helping dentists navigate the complexities of opening a new office.

1972
Hurricane Agnes submerges Benco. Though not insured, Builder Larry Cohen regains.

1974
First: full-service distributor to build a hub-and-spoke distribution network, leveraging the power of unitized shipping.

1978
First: dental distributor to add a professional dental space planner.

1988
First: dental company to launch an electronic automated supply ordering by fax.

1994
First: Windows-based supply ordering tool, PanOrder, makes inventory management easier.

1996
First: dental customer loyalty program, BLG Club, becomes dentistry’s most rewarding buying club.

2003
First: to convert and report customer satisfaction using Net Promoter Score, the world’s leading customer loyalty measure.

2010
First: design/equipment showroom. CentriFreight changes the way U.S. dentists purchase dental equipment; two more follow in California and Texas.

2014
First: to launch an open-in-office restoration production system, OnSiteLab.

2016
First with Patient MarketPlace, dentistry’s most complete online ordering solution.

Benco’s firsts have become industry standards, driving dentistry forward.